

93d CONGRESS } SENATE } REPORT  
2d Session } No. 93-1200

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AMENDMENTS

OCTOBER 1, 1974.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. KENNEDY, from the committee of conference,  
submitted the following

### CONFERENCE REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 12471]

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 12471) to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code, known as the Freedom of Information Act, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses as follows:

That the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the Senate amendment insert the following:

*That (a) the fourth sentence of section 552(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows: "Each agency shall also maintain and make available for public inspection and copying current indexes providing identifying information for the public as to any matter issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, and required by this paragraph to be made available or published. Each agency shall promptly publish, quarterly or more frequently, and distribute (by sale or otherwise) copies of each index or supplements thereto unless it determines by order published in the Federal Register that the publication would be unnecessary and impracticable, in which case the agency shall nonetheless provide copies of such index on request at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication."*

*(b) (1) Section 552(a)(3) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:*

*"(3) Except with respect to the records made available under paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection, each agency, upon any request for records which (A) reasonably describes such records and (B) is made in accordance with published rules stating the time, place, fees*

*(if any), and procedures to be followed, shall make the records promptly available to any person."*

*(2) Section 552(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by redesignating paragraph (4), and all references thereto, as paragraph (5) and by inserting immediately after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph:*

*"(4) (A) In order to carry out the provisions of this section, each agency shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to notice and receipt of public comment, specifying a uniform schedule of fees applicable to all constituent units of such agency. Such fees shall be limited to reasonable standard charges for document search and duplication and provide for recovery of only the direct costs of such search and duplication. Documents shall be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge where the agency determines that waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public.*

*"(B) On complaint, the district court of the United States in the district in which the complainant resides, or has his principal place of business, or in which the agency records are situated, or in the District of Columbia, has jurisdiction to enjoin the agency from withholding agency records and to order the production of any agency records improperly withheld from the complainant. In such a case the court shall determine the matter *de novo*, and may examine the contents of such agency records *in camera* to determine whether such records or any part thereof shall be withheld under any of the exemptions set forth in subsection (b) of this section, and the burden is on the agency to sustain its action.*

*"(C) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the defendant shall serve an answer or otherwise plead to any complaint made under this subsection within thirty days after service upon the defendant of the pleading in which such complaint is made, unless the court otherwise directs for good cause shown.*

*"(D) Except as to cases the court considers of greater importance, proceedings before the district court, as authorized by this subsection, and appeals therefrom, take precedence on the docket over all cases and shall be assigned for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and expedited in every way.*

*"(E) The court may assess against the United States reasonable attorney fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in any case under this section in which the complainant has substantially prevailed.*

*"(F) Whenever the court orders the production of any agency records improperly withheld from the complainant and assesses against the United States reasonable attorney fees and other litigation costs, and the court additionally issues a written finding that the circumstances surrounding the withholding raise questions whether agency personnel acted arbitrarily or capriciously with respect to the withholding, the Civil Service Commission shall promptly initiate a proceeding to determine whether disciplinary action is warranted against the officer or employee who was primarily responsible for the withholding. The Commission, after investigation and consideration of the evidence submitted, shall submit its findings and recommenda-*

tions to the administrative authority to the agency concerned and shall send copies of the findings and recommendations to the officer or employee or his representative. The administrative authority shall take the corrective action that the Commission recommends.

"(G) In the event of noncompliance with the order of the court, the district court may punish for contempt the responsible employee, and in the case of a uniformed service, the responsible member."

(c) Section 552(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new paragraph:

"(6) (A) Each agency, upon any request for records made under paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection, shall—

"(i) determine within ten days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the receipt of any such request whether to comply with such request and shall immediately notify the person making such request of such determination and the reasons therefor, and of the right of such person to appeal to the head of the agency any adverse determination; and

"(ii) make a determination with respect to any appeal within twenty days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the receipt of such appeal. If on appeal the denial of the request for records is in whole or in part upheld, the agency shall notify the person making such request of the provisions for judicial review of that determination under paragraph (4) of this subsection.

"(B) In unusual circumstances as specified in this subparagraph, the time limits prescribed in either clause (i) or clause (ii) of subparagraph (A) may be extended by written notice to the person making such request setting forth the reasons for such extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be dispatched. No such notice shall specify a date that would result in an extension for more than ten working days. As used in this subparagraph, 'unusual circumstances' means, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to the proper processing of the particular request—

"(i) the need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request;

"(ii) the need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request; or

"(iii) the need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another agency having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of the agency having substantial subject-matter interest therein.

"(C) Any person making a request to any agency for records under paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection shall be deemed to have exhausted his administrative remedies with respect to such request if the agency fails to comply with the applicable time limit provisions of this paragraph. If the Government can show exceptional circumstances exist and that the agency is exercising due diligence in responding to the request, the court may retain jurisdiction and allow the agency additional time to complete its review of the records. Upon any deter-

*mination by an agency to comply with a request for records, the records shall be made promptly available to such person making such request. Any notification of denial of any request for records under this subsection shall set forth the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of such request."*

*SEC. 2. (a) Section 552(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:*

*"(1) (A) specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and (B) are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive order;"*

*(b) Section 552(b)(7) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:*

*"(7) investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such records would (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings, (B) deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, (D) disclose the identity of a confidential source and, in the case of a record compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, confidential information furnished only by the confidential source, (E) disclose investigative techniques and procedures, or (F) endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement personnel;"*

*(c) Section 552(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following: "Any reasonably segregable portion of a record shall be provided to any person requesting such record after deletion of the portions which are exempt under this subsection."*

*SEC. 3. Section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new subsections:*

*"(d) On or before March 1 of each calendar year, each agency shall submit a report covering the preceding calendar year to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate for referral to the appropriate committees of the Congress. The report shall include—*

*"(1) the number of determinations made by such agency not to comply with requests for records made to such agency under subsection (a) and the reasons for each such determination;*

*"(2) the number of appeals made by persons under subsection (a)(6), the result of such appeals, and the reason for the action upon each appeal that results in a denial of information;*

*"(3) the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of records requested under this section, and the number of instances of participation for each;*

*"(4) the results of each proceeding conducted pursuant to subsection (a)(4)(F), including a report of the disciplinary action taken against the officer or employee who was primarily responsible for improperly withholding records or an explanation of why disciplinary action was not taken;*

*"(5) a copy of every rule made by such agency regarding this section;*

*"(6) a copy of the fee schedule and the total amount of fees collected by the agency for making records available under this section; and*

*"(7) such other information as indicates efforts to administer fully this section.*

*The Attorney General shall submit an annual report on or before March 1 of each calendar year which shall include for the prior calendar year a listing of the number of cases arising under this section, the exemption involved in each case, the disposition of such case, and the cost, fees, and penalties assessed under subsections (a)(4)(E), (F), and (G). Such report shall also include a description of the efforts undertaken by the Department of Justice to encourage agency compliance with this section.*

*"(e) For purposes of this section, the term 'agency' as defined in section 551(1) of this title includes any executive department, military department, Government corporation, Government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of the Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agency."*

*Sec. 4. The amendments made by this Act shall take effect on the ninetieth day beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.*

And the House agree to the same,

EDWARD KENNEDY,  
PHILIP A. HART,  
BIRCH BAYH,  
QUENTIN BURDICK,  
JOHN TUNNEY,  
CHARLES McC. MATHIAS, Jr.,  
*Managers on the Part of the Senate.*

CHET HOLIFIELD,  
WILLIAM S. MOORHEAD,  
JOHN E. MOSS,  
BILL ALEXANDER,  
FRANK HORTON  
JOHN N. ERLENBORN,  
PAUL McCLOSKEY,  
*Managers on the Part of the House.*

JOINT EXPLANATORY STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE  
OF CONFERENCE

The managers on the part of the House and the Senate at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 12471) to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code, known as the Freedom of Information Act, submit the following joint statement to the House and the Senate in explanation of the effect of the action agreed upon by the managers and recommended in the accompanying conference report:

The Senate amendment struck out all of the House bill after the enacting clause and inserted a substitute text.

The House recedes from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate with an amendment which is a substitute for the House bill and the Senate amendment. The differences between the House bill, the Senate amendment, and the substitute agreed to in conference are noted below, except for clerical corrections, conforming changes made necessary by agreements reached by the conferees, and minor drafting and clarifying changes.

INDEX PUBLICATION

The House bill added language to the present Freedom of Information law to require the publication and distribution (by sale or otherwise) of agency indexes identifying information for the public as to any matter issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, which is required by 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2) to be made available or published. This includes final opinions, orders, agency statements of policy and interpretations not published in the *Federal Register*, and administrative staff manuals and agency staff instructions that affect the public unless they are otherwise published and copies offered for sale to the public. Such published indexes would be required for the July 4, 1967, period to date. Where agency indexes are now published by commercial firms, as they are in some instances, such publication would satisfy the requirements of this amendment so long as they are made readily available for public use by the agency.

The Senate amendment contained similar provisions, indicating that the publication of indexes should be on a quarterly or more frequent basis, but provided that if an agency determined by an order published in the *Federal Register* that its publication of any index would be "unnecessary and impracticable," it would not actually be required to publish the index. However, it would nonetheless be required to provide copies of such index on request at a cost comparable to that charged had the index been published.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment, except that if the agency determines not to publish its index, it shall provide copies on request to any person at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication.

IDENTIFIABLE RECORDS

Present law requires that a request for information from an agency be for "identifiable records." The House bill provided that the request only "reasonably describe" the records being sought.

The Senate amendment contained similar language, but added a provision that when agency records furnished a person are demonstrated to be of "general public concern," the agency shall also make them available for public inspection and purchase, unless the agency can demonstrate that they could subsequently be denied to another individual under exemptions contained in subsection (b) of the Freedom of Information Act.

The conference substitute follows the House bill. With respect to the Senate proviso dealing with agency records of "general public interest," the conferees wish to make clear such language was eliminated only because they conclude that all agencies are presently obligated under the Freedom of Information Act to pursue such a policy and that all agencies should effect this policy through regulation.

SEARCH AND COPYING FEES

The Senate amendment contained a provision, not included in the House bill, directing the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to promulgate regulations establishing a uniform schedule of fees for agency search and copying of records made available to a person upon request under the law. It also provided that an agency could furnish the records requested without charge or at a reduced charge if it determined that such action would be in the public interest. It further provided that no fees should ordinarily be charged if the person requesting the records was an indigent, if such fees would amount to less than \$3, if the records were not located by the agency, or if they were determined to be exempt from disclosure under subsection (b) of the law.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment, except that each agency would be required to issue its own regulations for the recovery of only the direct costs of search and duplication—not including examination or review of records—instead of having such regulations promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget. In addition, the conference substitute retains the agency's discretionary public-interest waiver authority but eliminates the specific categories of situations where fees should not be charged.

By eliminating the list of specific categories, the conferees do not intend to imply that agencies should actually charge fees in those categories. Rather, they felt, such matters are properly the subject for individual agency determination in regulations implementing the Freedom of Information law. The conferees intend that fees should not be used for the purpose of discouraging requests for information or as obstacles to disclosure of requested information.

COURT REVIEW

The House bill clarifies the present Freedom of Information law with respect to *de novo* review requirements by Federal courts under

section 552(a)(3) by specifically authorizing the court to examine *in camera* any requested records in dispute to determine whether the records are—as claimed by an agency—exempt from mandatory disclosure under any of the nine categories of section 552(b) of the law.

The Senate amendment contained a similar provision authorizing *in camera* review by Federal courts and added another provision, not contained in the House bill, to authorize Freedom of Information suits to be brought in the Federal courts in the District of Columbia, even in cases where the agency records were located elsewhere.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment, providing that in determining *de novo* whether agency records have been properly withheld, the court may examine records *in camera* in making its determination under any of the nine categories of exemptions under section 552(b) of the law. In *Environmental Protection Agency v. Mink, et al.*, 410 U.S. 73 (1973), the Supreme Court ruled that *in camera* inspection of documents withheld under section 552(b)(1) of the law, authorizing the withholding of classified information, would ordinarily be precluded in Freedom of Information cases, unless Congress directed otherwise. H.R. 12471 amends the present law to permit such *in camera* examination at the discretion of the court. While *in camera* examination need not be automatic, in many situations it will plainly be necessary and appropriate. Before the court orders *in camera* inspection, the Government should be given the opportunity to establish by means of testimony or detailed affidavits that the documents are clearly exempt from disclosure. The burden remains on the Government under this law.

#### RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS

The House bill required that the defendant to a complaint under the Freedom of Information law serve a responsive pleading within 20 days after service, unless the court directed otherwise for good cause shown.

The Senate amendment contained a similar provision, except that it would give the defendant 40 days to file an answer.

The conference substitute would give the defendant 30 days to respond, unless the court directs otherwise for good cause shown.

#### EXPEDITED APPEALS

The Senate amendment included a provision, not contained in the House bill, to give precedence on appeal to cases brought under the Freedom of Information law, except as to cases on the docket which the court considers of greater importance.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment.

#### ASSESSMENT OF ATTORNEY FEES AND COSTS

The House bill provided that a Federal court may, in its discretion, assess reasonable attorney fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred by the complainant in Freedom of Information cases in which the Federal Government had not prevailed.

The Senate amendment also contained a similar provision applying to cases in which the complainant had “substantially prevailed,” but

added certain criteria for consideration by the court in making such awards, including the benefit to the public deriving from the case, the commercial benefit to the complainant and the nature of his interest in the Federal records sought, and whether the Government's withholding of the records sought had "a reasonable basis in law."

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment, except that the statutory criteria for court award of attorney fees and litigation costs were eliminated. By eliminating these criteria, the conferees do not intend to make the award of attorney fees automatic or to preclude the courts, in exercising their discretion as to awarding such fees, to take into consideration such criteria. Instead, the conferees believe that because the existing body of law on the award of attorney fees recognizes such factors, a statement of the criteria may be too delimiting and is unnecessary.

**SANCTION**

The Senate amendment contained a provision, not included in the House bill, authorizing the court in Freedom of Information Act cases to impose a sanction of up to 60 days suspension from employment against a Federal employee or official who the court found to have been responsible for withholding the requested records without reasonable basis in law.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment, except that the court is authorized to make a finding whether the circumstances surrounding the withholding raise questions whether agency personnel acted arbitrarily or capriciously with respect to the withholding. If the court so finds, the Civil Service Commission must promptly initiate a proceeding to determine whether disciplinary action is warranted against the responsible officer or employee. The Commission's findings and recommendations are to be submitted to the appropriate administrative authority of the agency concerned and to the responsible official or employee, and the administrative authority shall promptly take the disciplinary action recommended by the Commission. This section applies to all persons employed by agencies under this law.

**ADMINISTRATIVE DEADLINES**

The House bill required that an agency make a determination whether or not to comply with a request for records within 10 days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) and to notify the person making the request of such determination and the reasons therefor, and the right of such person to appeal any adverse determination to the head of the agency. It also required that agencies make a final determination on any appeal of an adverse determination within 20 days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the date of receipt of the appeal by the agency. Further, any person would be deemed to have exhausted his administrative remedies if the agency fails to comply with either of the two time deadlines.

The Senate amendment contained similar provisions but authorized certain other administrative actions to extend these deadlines for another 30 working days under specified types of situations, if requested

by an agency head and approved by the Attorney General. It also would grant an agency, under specified "unusual circumstances," a 10-working-day extension upon notification to the person requesting the records. In addition, an agency could transfer part of the number of days from one category to another and authorize the court to allow still additional time for the agency to respond to the request. The Senate amendment also provided that any agency's notification of denial of any request for records set forth the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial. It further allowed the court, in a Freedom of Information action, to allow the government additional time if "exceptional circumstances" were present and if the agency was exercising "due diligence in responding to the request."

The conference substitute generally adopts the 10- and 20-day administrative time deadlines of the House bill but also incorporates the 10-working-day extension of the Senate amendment for "unusual circumstances" in situations where the agency must search for and collect the requested records from field facilities separate from the office processing the request, where the agency must search for, collect, and examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records demanded in a single request, or where the agency has a need to consult with another agency or agency unit having a substantial interest in the determination because of the subject matter. This 10-day extension may be invoked by the agency only once—either during initial review of the request or during appellate review.

The 30-working-day certification provision of the Senate amendment has been eliminated, but the conference substitute retains the Senate language requiring that any agency's notification to a person of the denial of any request for records set forth the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial. The conferees intend that this listing include those persons responsible for the original, as well as the appellate, determination to deny the information requested. The conferees intend that consultations between an agency unit and the agency's legal staff, the public information staff, or the Department of Justice should not be considered the basis for an extension under this subsection.

The conference substitute also retains the Senate language giving the court authority to allow the agency additional time to examine requested records in exceptional circumstances where the agency was exercising due diligence in responding to the request and had been since the request was received.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY EXEMPTION (B) (1)

The House bill amended subsection (b) (1) of the Freedom of Information law to permit the withholding of information "authorized under the criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy."

The Senate amendment contained similar language but added "statute" to the exemption provision.

The conference substitute combines language of both House and Senate bills to permit the withholding of information where it is "specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign

policy" and is "in fact, properly classified" pursuant to both procedural and substantive criteria contained in such Executive order.

When linked with the authority conferred upon the Federal courts in this conference substitute for *in camera* examination of contested records as part of their *de novo* determination in Freedom of Information cases, this clarifies Congressional intent to override the Supreme Court's holding in the case of *E.P.A. v. Mink, et al.*, *supra*, with respect to *in camera* review of classified documents.

However, the conferees recognize that the Executive departments responsible for national defense and foreign policy matters have unique insights into what adverse affects might occur as a result of public disclosure of a particular classified record. Accordingly, the conferees expect that Federal courts, in making *de novo* determinations in section 552(b)(1) cases under the Freedom of Information law, will accord substantial weight to an agency's affidavit concerning the details of the classified status of the disputed record.

Restricted Data (42 U.S.C. 2162), communication information (18 U.S.C. 798), and intelligence sources and methods (50 U.S.C. 403 (d) (3) and (g)), for example, may be classified and exempted under section 552(b)(3) of the Freedom of Information Act. When such information is subjected to court review, the court should recognize that if such information is classified pursuant to one of the above statutes, it shall be exempted under this law.

#### INVESTIGATORY RECORDS

The Senate amendment contained an amendment to subsection (b)(7) of the Freedom of Information law, not included in the House bill, that would clarify Congressional intent disapproving certain court interpretations which have tended to expand the scope of agency authority to withhold certain "investigatory files compiled for law enforcement purposes." The Senate amendment would permit an agency to withhold investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes only to the extent that the production of such records would interfere with enforcement proceedings, deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, disclose the identity of an informer, or disclose investigative techniques and procedures.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment except for the substitution of "confidential source" for "informer," the addition of language protecting information compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority from a confidential source in the course of a criminal investigation or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, the deletion of the word "clearly" relating to avoidance of an "unwarranted invasion of personal privacy," and the addition of a category allowing withholding of information whose disclosure "would endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement personnel."

The conferees wish to make clear that the scope of this exception against disclosure of "investigative techniques and procedures" should not be interpreted to include routine techniques and procedures already well known to the public, such as ballistics tests, fingerprinting, and other scientific tests or commonly known techniques. Nor is this

exemption intended to include records falling within the scope of subsection 552(a)(2) of the Freedom of Information law, such as administrative staff manuals and instructions to staff that affect a member of the public.

The substitution of the term "confidential source" in section 552 (b)(7)(D) is to make clear that the identity of a person other than a paid informer may be protected if the person provided information under an express assurance of confidentiality or in circumstances from which such an assurance could be reasonably inferred. Under this category, in every case where the investigatory records sought were compiled for law enforcement purposes—either civil or criminal in nature—the agency can withhold the names, addresses, and other information that would reveal the identity of a confidential source who furnished the information. However, where the records are compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority, *all* of the information furnished only by a confidential source may be withheld if the information was compiled in the course of a criminal investigation. In addition, where the records are compiled by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, all of the information furnished only by a confidential source may also be withheld. The conferees intend the term "criminal law enforcement authority" to be narrowly construed to include the Federal Bureau of Investigation and similar investigative authorities. Likewise, "national security" is to be strictly construed to refer to military security, national defense, or foreign policy. The term "intelligence" in section 552(b)(7)(D) is intended to apply to positive intelligence-gathering activities, counter-intelligence activities, and background security investigations by governmental units which have authority to conduct such functions. By "an agency" the conferees intend to include criminal law enforcement authorities as well as other agencies. Personnel, regulatory, and civil enforcement investigations are covered by the first clause authorizing withholding of information that would reveal the identity of a confidential source but are not encompassed by the second clause authorizing withholding of all confidential information under the specified circumstances.

The conferees also wish to make clear that disclosure of information about a person to that person does not constitute an invasion of his privacy. Finally, the conferees express approval of the present Justice Department policy waiving legal exemptions for withholding historic investigatory records over 15 years old, and they encourage its continuation.

#### SEGREGABLE PORTIONS OF RECORDS

The Senate amendment contained a provision, not included in the House bill, providing that any reasonably segregable portion of a record shall be provided to any person requesting such record after the deletion of portions which may be exempted under subsection (b) of the Freedom of Information law.

The conference substitute follows the Senate amendment.

#### ANNUAL REPORTS BY AGENCIES

The House bill provided that each agency submit an annual report, on or before March 1 of each calendar year, to the Speaker of the House

and the President of the Senate, for referral to the appropriate committees of the Congress. Such report shall include statistical information on the number of agency determinations to withhold information requested under the Freedom of Information law; the reasons for such withholding; the number of appeals of such adverse determinations with the result and reasons for each; a copy of every rule made by the agency in connection with this law; a copy of the agency fee schedule with the total amount of fees collected by the agency during the year; and other information indicating efforts to properly administer the Freedom of Information law.

The Senate amendment contained similar provisions and added two requirements not contained in the House bill, (1) that each agency report list those officials responsible for each denial of records and the numbers of cases in which each participated during the year and (2) that the Attorney General also submit a separate annual report on or before March 1 of each calendar year listing the number of cases arising under the Freedom of Information law, the exemption involved in each such case, the disposition of the case, and the costs, fees, and penalties assessed under the law. The Attorney General's report shall also include a description of Justice Department efforts to encourage agency compliance with the law.

The conference substitute incorporates the major provisions of the House bill and two Senate amendments. With respect to the annual reporting by each agency of the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of records requested under the Freedom of Information law and the number of instances of participation for each, the conferees wish to make clear that such listing include those persons responsible for the original determination to deny the information requested in each case as well as all other agency employees or officials who were responsible for determinations at subsequent stages in the decision.

#### EXPANSION OF AGENCY DEFINITION

The House bill extends the applicability of the Freedom of Information law to include any executive department, military department, Government corporation, Government-controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agency.

The Senate amendment provided that for purposes of the Freedom of Information law the term agency included any agency defined in section 551(1) of title 5, United States Code, and in addition included the United States Postal Service, the Postal Rate Commission, and any other authority of the Government of the United States which is a corporation and which receives any appropriated funds.

The conference substitute follows the House bill. The conferees state that they intend to include within the definition of "agency" those entities encompassed by 5 U.S.C. 551 and other entities including the United States Postal Service, the Postal Rate Commission, and government corporations or government-controlled corporations now in existence or which may be created in the future. They do not intend to include corporations which receive appropriated funds but

are neither chartered by the Federal Government nor controlled by it, such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Expansion of the definition of "agency" in this subsection is intended to broaden applicability of the Freedom of Information Act but it is not intended that the term "agency" be applied to subdivisions, offices or units within an agency.

With respect to the meaning of the term "Executive Office of the President" the conferees intend the result reached in *Soucie v. David*, 448 F. 2d. 1067 (C.A.D.C. 1971). The term is not to be interpreted as including the President's immediate personal staff or units in the Executive Office whose sole function is to advise and assist the President.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Both the House bill and the Senate amendment provided for an effective date of 90 days after the date of enactment of these amendments to the Freedom of Information law.

The conference substitute adopts the language of the Senate amendment.

EDWARD KENNEDY,  
PHILIP A. HART,  
BIRCH BAYH,  
QUENTIN N. BURDICK,  
JOHN TUNNEY,  
CHARLES McC. MATHIAS,  
*Managers on the Part of the Senate.*

CHET HOLIFIELD,  
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JOHN N. ERLENBORN,  
PAUL McCLOSKEY,  
*Managers on the Part of the House.*





Public Law 93-502  
93rd Congress, H. R. 12471  
November 21, 1974

## An Act

To amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code, known as the Freedom of Information Act.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) the fourth sentence of section 552(a) (2) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows: "Each agency shall also maintain and make available for public inspection and copying current indexes providing identifying information for the public as to any matter issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, and required by this paragraph to be made available or published. Each agency shall promptly publish, quarterly or more frequently, and distribute (by sale or otherwise) copies of each index or supplements thereto unless it determines by order published in the Federal Register that the publication would be unnecessary and impracticable, in which case the agency shall nonetheless provide copies of such index on request at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication."*

Public information.  
Indexes, publication and distribution.

Publication in Federal Register.

(b) (1) Section 552(a) (3) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

Records, availability to public.

"(3) Except with respect to the records made available under paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection, each agency, upon any request for records which (A) reasonably describes such records and (B) is made in accordance with published rules stating the time, place, fees (if any), and procedures to be followed, shall make the records promptly available to any person."

(2) Section 552(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by redesignating paragraph (4), and all references thereto, as paragraph (5) and by inserting immediately after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph:

Document search and duplication fees, regulations.

"(4) (A) In order to carry out the provisions of this section, each agency shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to notice and receipt of public comment, specifying a uniform schedule of fees applicable to all constituent units of such agency. Such fees shall be limited to reasonable standard charges for document search and duplication and provide for recovery of only the direct costs of such search and duplication. Documents shall be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge where the agency determines that waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public.

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"(B) On complaint, the district court of the United States in the district in which the complainant resides, or has his principal place of business, or in which the agency records are situated, or in the District of Columbia, has jurisdiction to enjoin the agency from withholding agency records and to order the production of any agency records improperly withheld from the complainant. In such a case the court shall determine the matter *de novo*, and may examine the contents of such agency records *in camera* to determine whether such records or any part thereof shall be withheld under any of the exemptions set forth in subsection (b) of this section, and the burden is on the agency to sustain its action.

Withheld agency records, court examination.

"(C) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the defendant shall serve an answer or otherwise plead to any complaint made under this subsection within thirty days after service upon the defendant of the pleading in which such complaint is made, unless the court otherwise directs for good cause shown.

Complaints, response by defendant.

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Attorney fees  
and costs.

CSC proceeding  
against officer  
or employee.

Noncompliance,  
penalty.

Administrative  
deadlines.

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"Unusual cir-  
cumstances."

"(D) Except as to cases the court considers of greater importance, proceedings before the district court, as authorized by this subsection, and appeals therefrom, take precedence on the docket over all cases and shall be assigned for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and expedited in every way.

"(E) The court may assess against the United States reasonable attorney fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in any case under this section in which the complainant has substantially prevailed.

"(F) Whenever the court orders the production of any agency records improperly withheld from the complainant and assesses against the United States reasonable attorney fees and other litigation costs, and the court additionally issues a written finding that the circumstances surrounding the withholding raise questions whether agency personnel acted arbitrarily or capriciously with respect to the withholding, the Civil Service Commission shall promptly initiate a proceeding to determine whether disciplinary action is warranted against the officer or employee who was primarily responsible for the withholding. The Commission, after investigation and consideration of the evidence submitted, shall submit its findings and recommendations to the administrative authority of the agency concerned and shall send copies of the findings and recommendations to the officer or employee or his representative. The administrative authority shall take the corrective action that the Commission recommends.

"(G) In the event of noncompliance with the order of the court, the district court may punish for contempt the responsible employee, and in the case of a uniformed service, the responsible member."

(c) Section 552(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereto the following new paragraph:

"(6)(A) Each agency, upon any request for records made under paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection, shall—

"(i) determine within ten days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the receipt of any such request whether to comply with such request and shall immediately notify the person making such request of such determination and the reasons therefor, and of the right of such person to appeal to the head of the agency any adverse determination; and

"(ii) make a determination with respect to any appeal within twenty days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the receipt of such appeal. If an appeal is denied, the agency shall notify the person making such request of the provisions for judicial review of that determination under paragraph (4) of this subsection.

"(B) In unusual circumstances as specified in this subparagraph, the time limits prescribed in either clause (i) or clause (ii) of subparagraph (A) may be extended by written notice to the person making such request setting forth the reasons for such extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be dispatched. No such notice shall specify a date that would result in an extension for more than ten working days. As used in this subparagraph, 'unusual circumstances' means, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to the proper processing of the particular request—

"(i) the need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request;

"(ii) the need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request; or

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"(iii) the need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another agency having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of the agency having substantial subject-matter interest therein.

"(C) Any person making a request to any agency for records under paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection shall be deemed to have exhausted his administrative remedies with respect to such request if the agency fails to comply with the applicable time limit provisions of this paragraph. If the Government can show exceptional circumstances exist and that the agency is exercising due diligence in responding to the request, the court may retain jurisdiction and allow the agency additional time to complete its review of the records. Upon any determination by an agency to comply with a request for records, the records shall be made promptly available to such person making such request. Any notification of denial of any request for records under this subsection shall set forth the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of such request."

SEC. 2. (a) Section 552(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(1) (A) specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and (B) are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive order;".

(b) Section 552(b)(7) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(7) investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such records would (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings, (B) deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, (D) disclose the identity of a confidential source and, in the case of a record compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, confidential information furnished only by the confidential source, (E) disclose investigative techniques and procedures, or (F) endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement personnel;".

(c) Section 552(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following: "Any reasonably segregable portion of a record shall be provided to any person requesting such record after deletion of the portions which are exempt under this subsection."

SEC. 3. Section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new subsections:

"(d) On or before March 1 of each calendar year, each agency shall submit a report covering the preceding calendar year to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate for referral to the appropriate committees of the Congress. The report shall include—

"(1) the number of determinations made by such agency not to comply with requests for records made to such agency under subsection (a) and the reasons for each such determination;

"(2) the number of appeals made by persons under subsection (a)(6), the result of such appeals, and the reason for the action upon each appeal that results in a denial of information;

"(3) the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of records requested under this section, and the number of instances of participation for each;

Time extension  
for agency  
review.

National defense  
and foreign poli-  
cy, exemption.

Investigatory  
records for law  
enforcement pur-  
poses, exemption.

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Segregable por-  
tions of  
records.

Reports to  
Speaker of the  
House and  
President of  
the Senate.

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"(4) the results of each proceeding conducted pursuant to subsection (a) (4)(F), including a report of the disciplinary action taken against the officer or employee who was primarily responsible for improperly withholding records or an explanation of why disciplinary action was not taken;

"(5) a copy of every rule made by such agency regarding this section;

"(6) a copy of the fee schedule and the total amount of fees collected by the agency for making records available under this section; and

"(7) such other information as indicates efforts to administer fully this section.

**Annual report.** The Attorney General shall submit an annual report on or before March 1 of each calendar year which shall include for the prior calendar year a listing of the number of cases arising under this section, the exemption involved in each case, the disposition of such case, and the cost, fees, and penalties assessed under subsections (a)(4) (E), (F), and (G). Such report shall also include a description of the efforts undertaken by the Department of Justice to encourage agency compliance with this section.

**"Agency."**  
5 USC 551.  
  
"For purposes of this section, the term 'agency' as defined in section 551(1) of this title includes any executive department, military department, Government corporation, Government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of the Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agency."

**Effective date.** Sec. 4. The amendments made by this Act shall take effect on the ninetieth day beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.  
5 USC 552  
note.

CARL ALBERT

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

JAMES O. EASTLAND

*President of the Senate pro tempore.*

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88 STAT. 1565

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, U.S.,

November 20, 1974.

The House of Representatives having proceeded to reconsider the bill (H.R. 12471) entitled "An Act to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code, known as the Freedom of Information Act", returned by the President of the United States with his objections, to the House of Representatives, in which it originated, it was

*Resolved*, That the said bill pass, two-thirds of the House of Representatives agreeing to pass the same.

Attest:

W. PAT JENNINGS

*W. Pat Jennings*

*W. Raymond Colley*

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I certify that this Act originated in the House of Representatives.

W. PAT JENNINGS  
*Clerk.*

*By W. Raymond Colley*

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,  
November 21, 1974.

The Senate having proceeded to reconsider the bill (H. R. 12471) entitled "An Act to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code, known as the Freedom of Information Act", returned by the President of the United States with his objections to the House of Representatives, in which it originated, it was

*Resolved*, That the said bill pass, two-thirds of the Senators present having voted in the affirmative.

Attest:

FRANCIS R. VALEO  
*Secretary.*

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 93-876 (Comm. on Government Operations) and No. 93-1380 (Comm. of Conference).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 93-854 accompanying S. 2543 (Comm. on the Judiciary) and No. 93-1200 (Comm. of Conference).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 120 (1974):

Mar. 14, considered and passed House.

May 30, considered and passed Senate, amended in lieu of S. 2543.

Oct. 1, Senate agreed to conference report.

Oct. 7, House agreed to conference report.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 10, No. 42:

Oct. 17, vetoed; Presidential message.

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 120 (1974):

Nov. 20, House overrode veto.

Nov. 21, Senate overrode veto.